

THE DOCTRINE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
Part XIII: The Future Work Of The Son Of God
A. The Rapture - The Coming Of Christ FOR His Saints

I. Introduction

- A. The Evangelical community is still not in consensus as to when the rapture of the Church will take place. Some believe that it occurs after the coming Great Tribulation (post-tribulationism) so that the Church goes through it. Others believe the Church departs halfway through this period in a mid-tribulation rapture. Still others think that Christians are raptured throughout the Great Tribulation as they mature (Partial Rapture Position). Others believe in a pre-tribulation rapture before the Great Tribulation **starts**.
- B. The view we hold affects what we do on the earth now. If we know that we are going to enter the Great Tribulation, we need to stockpile goods for protection! If we are pre-tribulationists, we don't worry about doing so as we plan to be gone before the time arrives. Thus, we must know what to believe to live well!

II. The Rapture - The Coming Of Christ FOR His Saints.

- A. The Church is the Christ's Bride, 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:6-8. If we note the culture on marriages in Jesus' day, we can learn when the Rapture occurs: (Gothard's, "The Picture of Marriage...")
 - 1. The prospective bridegroom took the initiative to travel from his father's home to the home of the prospective bride. Accordingly, Christ took the initiative in coming to earth for His bride, Ep. 5:25-28.
 - 2. The father of the woman negotiated with the prospective bridegroom for the dowry price. Christ similarly paid the price of redemption with His own blood for the Church, 1 Cor. 6:19-20.
 - 3. When the bridegroom paid the dowry, she was positionally his wife. Though no physical union had occurred, the pact was settled. Similarly, the Church is sanctified in Christ, Ep. 5:25-27.
 - 4. The bridegroom then returned to his father's home to prepare a dwelling place for his bride and himself while the bride stayed in her father's home to ready her wedding dress. Christ likewise now prepares a dwelling place in heaven (Jn. 14:2) while the Church does righteousness on earth, Rev. 19:8.
 - 5. After this, usually unannounced and at night, the bridegroom with his best man and escorts left his father's home and traveled to pick up his bride to take her back to his father's house and consummate the marriage by physical union. The bride did not know the exact time of the groom's appearance, so his arrival was preceded by an excited shout. Christ likewise comes with a shout in what we believe is the pre-tribulation rapture to take us to be forever with Him in His father's house, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
 - 6. Later, a wedding feast was held in honor of the Bride and Groom which included friends and family of the couple. This corresponds to the Second Coming and Millennial Kingdom with its resurrection of Great Tribulation and Old Testament saints, Rev. 19-20. (Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord, p. 273)
 - 7. Thus, according to wedding customs of Jesus' day, the rapture is best seen as pre-tribulation!
- B. Also, Paul teaches a pre-tribulation rapture in 2 Thessalonians 2 to settle fears of a post-tribulation rapture:
 - 1. Paul wrote to believers who feared that the day of the Lord, the Great Tribulation Period, was upon them, and that idea had rattled them away from peace of mind and productive service, 2 Thess. 2:2,17.
 - 2. To counter this unproductivity and dread, Paul laid out some facts about the day of the Lord:
 - a. This time would not come until after worldwide apostasy (2:3a) **and** the antichrist appear, 2:3b-5.
 - b. However, he would not be revealed until a Restrainer permitted it, 2:6-9. Since Satan certainly would not want him restrained, we believe the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit through the Church.
 - c. When antichrist arrived, he would be permitted to deceive the world to follow him as **judgment** for those who **rejected** the **gospel** of Christ given by the Church, 2 Thess. 2:10-12 with 1:7-8.
 - d. However, the Church, being **innocent** of such **rejection** of the **Gospel**, is destined for receiving the **glory** of God, and that happens at the **rapture**, 2 Thess. 2:13-14 with Rom. 8:23. This salvation of the Church is to settle and establish believers in good works, 2 Thess. 2:15-17.
 - e. The only way Paul makes sense is to conclude he means a pre-tribulation rapture! Otherwise, the Christian must experience God's wrath for rejecting the Gospel when he is **innocent** of that sin!

Lesson: According to Oriental wedding customs in Jesus day and the logical argument of Paul in comforting the Thessalonians in 2 Thess. 2 (besides many other arguments), we believe the Bible teaches a Pre-tribulation Rapture. We are not to stockpile for the Tribulation, but live for the rapture!